

NDI celebrates John Lennon's musical legacy

More than 35,000 school children and their families will learn about the legendary work of John Lennon, through National Dance Institute's (NDI) 2008-2009 curricular theme.

Lennon's enduring music, artwork and humanitarian efforts are being explored by children in 30 NDI partner schools throughout the city. Original choreography was created for Lennon songs and the year-long study will culminate in June at NDI's Event of the Year.

"John Lennon is a giant of the 20th Century and a musical legend who today's generation knows little about. Through NDI's curricular theme, the children are being inspired by this great artist and humanitarian," says NDI Artistic Director Ellen Weinstein.

"As a young boy, Lennon

Stage

was introduced to music, literature and art, and because of it, his life was changed forever. He was one of the most influential writers and artists of our time who used his genius and celebrity to make a positive impact in the world. Lennon talked about being a global citizen and taught us that we all have an obligation to care about the globe. This is something our children can take hold of and learn from."

Throughout NDI's In-School Program, children have been studying the curricular theme of John Lennon through movement and music. Young people are creating a Japanese-inspired Peace Tree Project reflecting

dreams and wishes, recreating Strawberry Fields, learning about the idealized Nutopia, and studying the Civil Rights movement.

NDI's year-long In-School Program gives children the opportunity to explore the process by which movement put to music becomes dance. NDI classes involve an entire grade and take place during the school day, placing the arts on equal standing with math, science and social studies.

Participants in the In-School Program share what they have created with their families, teachers and fellow students through performances in their schools.

In June 2009, more than 200 of National Dance Institute's advanced team dancers will join with professional musicians and singers for NDI's Event

of the Year performances, A Celebration of John Lennon, held at LaGuardia High School Concert Hall in Manhattan on June 20, 21 and 22.

The Event of the Year will examine Lennon's life from his early days as a student and "class clown" in a Liverpool classroom, to his introduction to music and the height of Beatlemania, to Lennon's reflection on world events, his reaction to suffocating fame and his relationships with Paul McCartney and Yoko Ono. NDI dancers will perform to musical hits including "Day Tripper," "A Day in the Life," "Help," "Come Together," "Can't Buy Me Love," and "Imagine."

In Summer 2008, at NDI's Irene Diamond Summer Institute, actor, director and dancer Terrence Mann conducted a musical theat-



Children of National Dance Institute give a preview of the 2009 Event of the Year: A Celebration of John Lennon, performing 'Imagine' choreographed by Ellen Weinstein.

Photo by Jill Levine

er workshop. Along with choreographer and dancer, Christopher d'Amboise, original choreography for the Lennon song "Imagine" was created, with movement inspired by American Sign Language. This piece will be performed at NDI's Event of the Year.

In keeping with the year-long John Lennon theme, NDI will honor Yoko Ono at its 32nd annual Gala at the NOKIA Theatre in Times Square on April 30, where NDI children will perform. Yoko Ono recently dedi-

cated her poem "Make Your Heart Dance" to the NDI children: "When you are feeling bad...Do one thing a day...To make your heart dance...It could be a simple thing like looking up at the sky...If you can't manage even that...Do something for someone...To make their heart dance...It could be a simple thing like giving a call...Do this for a couple of months and... Your life will change in a big way...One day we'll all dance together...Alright?...I Love You, yoko."